

Winter Vehicle Preparedness Checklist

A practical seasonal checklist for cold weather, snow, ice, road closures, and getting stranded.

1. VEHICLE CHECK BEFORE WINTER

- Check tire tread, condition, age, and manufacturer-recommended tire pressure.
- Inspect the spare tire or understand the tire-repair system supplied with the vehicle.
- Test an aging battery and inspect terminals and connections.
- Check coolant level and confirm the cooling system is ready for expected temperatures.
- Inspect wiper blades and fill with washer fluid rated for winter temperatures.
- Test front and rear defrosters.
- Check headlights, brake lights, turn signals, hazard lights, tail lights, and reverse lights.
- Address brake warning lights, unusual noises, pulling, vibration, or abnormal pedal feel.

2. SNOW & TRACTION READINESS

- Know whether winter tires make sense for the roads and climate you regularly drive.
- Check state or route-specific chain and traction-device requirements before winter travel.
- Verify that chains/cables are the correct size and permitted for your exact vehicle and tires.
- Practice installing traction devices at home before you need them roadside.
- Keep an ice scraper, snow brush, compact shovel, and work gloves in the vehicle.

3. WINTER EMERGENCY KIT

- Warm blanket or emergency insulation.
- Warm hat, gloves or mittens, extra socks, and an additional insulating layer.
- Dedicated flashlight or headlamp with working batteries/charge.
- First-aid supplies and essential personal medications.
- Drinking water and shelf-stable snacks; rotate them periodically.
- Phone charging cable and charged portable power bank.
- Jumper cables and/or a charged portable jump starter.
- Tire-pressure gauge and portable tire inflator.
- Reflective warning triangles or other appropriate visibility equipment.

WINTER VEHICLE PREPAREDNESS - TRIP & STRANDED-DRIVER CHECKLIST

4. BEFORE A WINTER ROAD TRIP

- Check the forecast for the entire route, not just your starting point.
- Check current road closures, pass conditions, and transportation-agency alerts.
- Charge your phone and backup power bank.
- Start with adequate fuel or EV charge for delays, detours, and cold-weather energy use.
- Confirm the emergency kit and traction equipment are actually in the vehicle.
- Tell someone your destination, general route, and expected arrival when conditions warrant it.
- Reconsider, delay, reroute, or cancel the trip if conditions become unsafe.

5. IF YOU BECOME STRANDED

- Stay with the vehicle in severe winter conditions unless remaining there creates an immediate danger.
- Call emergency or roadside assistance and communicate your location, direction of travel, vehicle description, and number of occupants.
- Conserve phone battery after communicating your location.
- Make the vehicle visible without putting yourself in moving traffic.
- Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow before running the engine.
- Ventilate appropriately while the engine is running and avoid continuous unnecessary idling.
- Use warm clothing and blankets before you become seriously chilled.
- Move arms and legs periodically, but avoid strenuous activity and sweating.
- Conserve fuel, EV battery, food, water, lighting, and portable power.
- Do not exhaust yourself trying to dig out when sheltering safely is the better option.

6. SEASONAL KIT MAINTENANCE

- Recharge jump starters and power banks.
- Test flashlights/headlamps and replace weak batteries.
- Rotate food and inspect vehicle water supplies.
- Check first-aid supplies and medications.
- Confirm warm clothing still fits everyone who may ride in the vehicle.
- Verify chains/traction devices still fit after any vehicle or tire change.
- Review the kit at the beginning and end of winter.

THREE THINGS I NEED TO FIX OR ADD

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Preparedness note: Match your vehicle kit to your climate, route, passengers, vehicle, and expected travel. Always follow your vehicle owner's manual and current local road and traction requirements.